Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 113094
ORIGIN AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SIG-03 MMO-04 PA-02 ICA-20
SS-15 INR-10 /077 R

DRAFTED BY AF/P: BRUSSELL:LMG
APPROVED BY AF/P: RHOLLIDAY
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R 032214Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANJUL
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
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AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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PAGE 02 STATE 113094

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 3, 1978

FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL, UNCORRECTED EXCERPT FROM THE

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING. IF NECESSARY OFFICIAL VERSION WILL FOLLOW.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY REACTION TO THE APPARENT "OLIVE BRANCH" EXTENDED BY THE RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE GUERILLA FORCES YESTERDAY?

A. I WOULD SAY FIRST, THAT I DO NOT HAVE A JUDGMENT ON THAT PARTICULAR MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IN ANY CASE , IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR OFFER OF A GENERAL AMNESTY AND THE RETURN OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING AGAINST THE PRE-EXISTING REGIME, IS A REACTION IN FACT AND THE ACTION ON THE GROUND -- A REACTION OF THE PEOPLE WITHIN RHODESIA -- A REACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN RHODESIA -- AND A REACTION OF THOSE TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED. AND, FRANKLY, WE WOULD WITHHOLD JUDGMENT PENDING THAT. I WOULD NOTE THAT WHAT IS CRITICAL IN ANY CASE TO THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES IN A TRANSITION IN RHODESIA, IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT ALL THE PARTIES HAVE IN THE FAIRNESS OF THE PROCEDURES FOR TRANSITION -- I.E. THAT THE POSSIBILITY FOR FULL PARTICIPA-

TION IS GUARANTEED. AND IN THAT CONNECTION, THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE PROPOSAL WE PUT FORWARD FOR SUCH AN IMPARTIAL TRANSITION WITH SOME KIND OF GUARANTEES WHICH WOULD BE SATISFACTORY WITH ALL THE PARTIES, REMAINS A VALID PROPOSAL. BUT I UNCLASSIFIED

AM NOT, IN FACT, PASSING JUDGMENT AT THIS TIME. THE ADMINISTRATION IS NOT PASSING JUDGMENT AT THIS TIME ON THAT PROPOSAL.

Q. COULD YOU CLARIFY THE BASIC POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN AT THIS POINT?

A. THERE IS NOTHING PARTICULARLY NEW ON THAT. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION, AN "ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE", WOULD BE IN THE INTEREST OF A PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE. WE ARE CONTINUING TO PRESS THAT CASE WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES. I DO NOT HAVE A SPECIFIC "COMING-AND-GOING" FOR YOU AT THIS POINT ON OUR PEOPLE TALKING TO THIS PERSON OR THAT PERSON, OR THAT GROUP.

Q. IT WOULD SEEM LIKELY THAT IN THE THREE HOURS CONVERSATION THAT THE SECRETARY HAD WITH THE FRONT-LINE PEOPLE ON SUNDAY, THE QUESTION WOULD HAVE ARISEN WHETHER THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN WOULD "ADVISE" THE MEMBERS OF SWAPO AND ZANU TO GO IN, OR NOT TO GO IN. DID THAT COME UP?

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

A. NO, I DON'T THINK SO. I THINK THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY PREMATURE, AS A MATTER OF FACT, BECAUSE IN THE ABSENCE OF KNOWING THE TERMS AND SAYING THE EXACT LANGUAGE, IT WOULD BE HARD TO ADVISE PEOPLE WHAT TO DO.

Q. WELL, LET ME PUT IT ANOTHER WAY: IF ASKED, WHAT WOULD WE ADVISE THE SWAPO AND ZANU PEOPLE TO DO AT THIS POINT.

A. AT THIS POINT, THE REASON I AM WITHHOLDING AN ANSWER TO THAT IS THE SAME REASON THAT WE ARE WITHHOLDING A JUDGMENT GENERALLY -- AND THAT IS TO SEE PRECISELY BOTH HOW THE ANNOUNCED PLANS ARE IMPLEMENTED TO SEE WHAT THE REACTION OF THE WHITE POWER STRUCTURE IS IN ZIMBABWE TO THIS PLAN, AND TO SEE WHAT THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE THEM-

SELVES MAY BE TO IT. AND FOR THE MOMENT, WE HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER.

CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PRESS CONFERENCES, DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE113094
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: BRUSSELL:LMG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780190-0536
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780595/aaaaddtn.tel
Line Count: 140
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d61e23a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2799766
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING, MAY 3, 1978 FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL, UNCORRECTED EXCERPT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING. IF NECE SSARY
TAGS: SOPN, AMGT, RH, WA
To: BANJUL USNATO MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d61e23a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
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